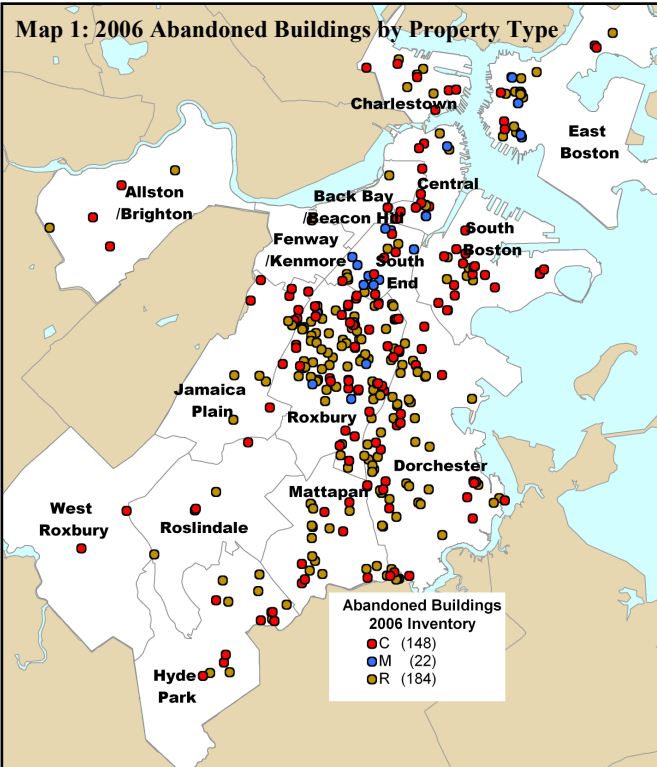




Trends 2006 Abandoned Buildings

CITY OF BOSTON/THOMAS M. MENINO, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CHARLOTTE GOLAR RICHIE, CHIEF AND DIRECTOR



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

In the 2006 abandoned buildings survey there was a slight increase of commercial and mixed-use buildings while the number of residential buildings declined.

This year's survey is DND's tenth annual survey. Since the survey began in 1997, the total number of abandoned buildings has decreased by 66%, from 1,044 to 354 buildings. The number of residential abandoned buildings has decreased by 77%, from 796 to 184 buildings. Commercial and mixed-use abandonment has decreased by 32%, from 248 buildings in 1997 to 170 buildings in 2006.

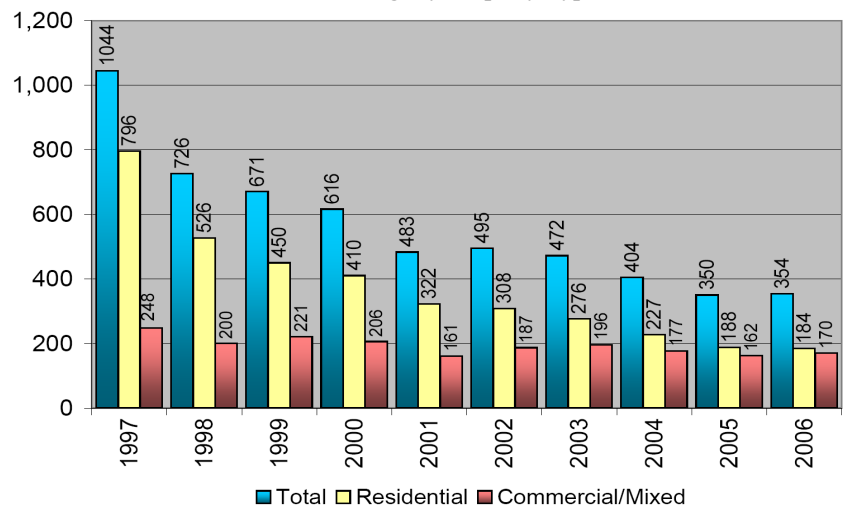
Since last year, the total number of abandoned buildings has increased 1% from 350 buildings in 2005 to 354. Residential abandonment decreased by 2%, while commercial and mixed-use abandonment increased by 5%.

61 of the 354 abandoned buildings in 2006 were newly added to the inventory, while 66 properties that appeared abandoned last year were renovated, demolished or are no longer abandoned.

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Chart 1: Abandoned Buildings by Property Type**



**Chart includes exempt properties, which have been classified "residential" or "commercial/mixed" based on visual inspection.

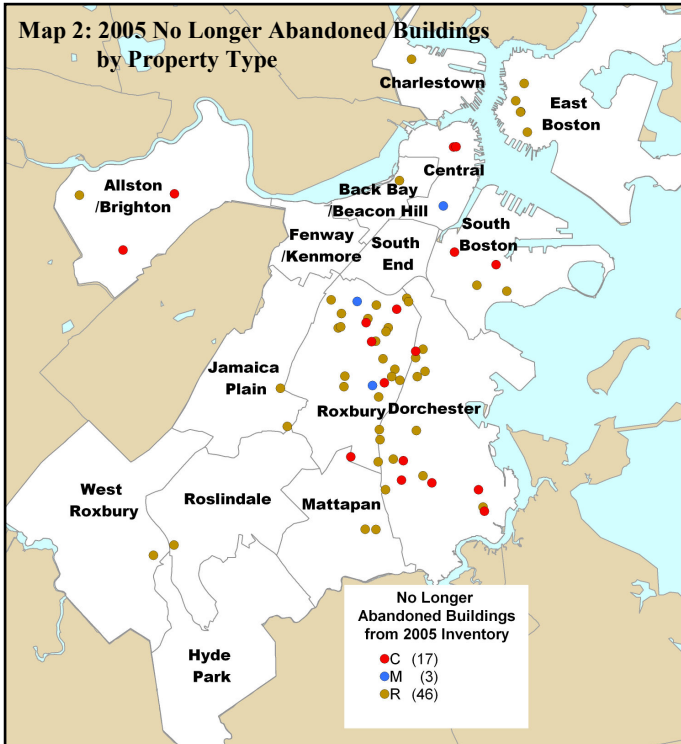


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**Map 2: 2005 No Longer Abandoned Buildings
by Property Type**



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The abandoned building* survey is based on information gathered in previous surveys and data on buildings that are likely to be abandoned. A street by street survey is completed for most of the city, including a resurvey of previously identified buildings. This area includes 99% of the abandoned buildings identified from 1999 to 2006. A photo is taken of each property and a form is completed from a visual inspection of the exterior of the property for overall condition and rehab status. Data from the Assessing and Fire Departments are then used to enhance the street-by-street survey.

* An abandoned building is any residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use building (excludes sheds and garages on residential property) which is not occupied and has visible signs of physical distress (boarded, burned, open to the elements, otherwise deteriorated, etc.). Property used for storage may be surveyed as abandoned if it is boarded or appears otherwise unoccupied.

CHANGES IN INVENTORY

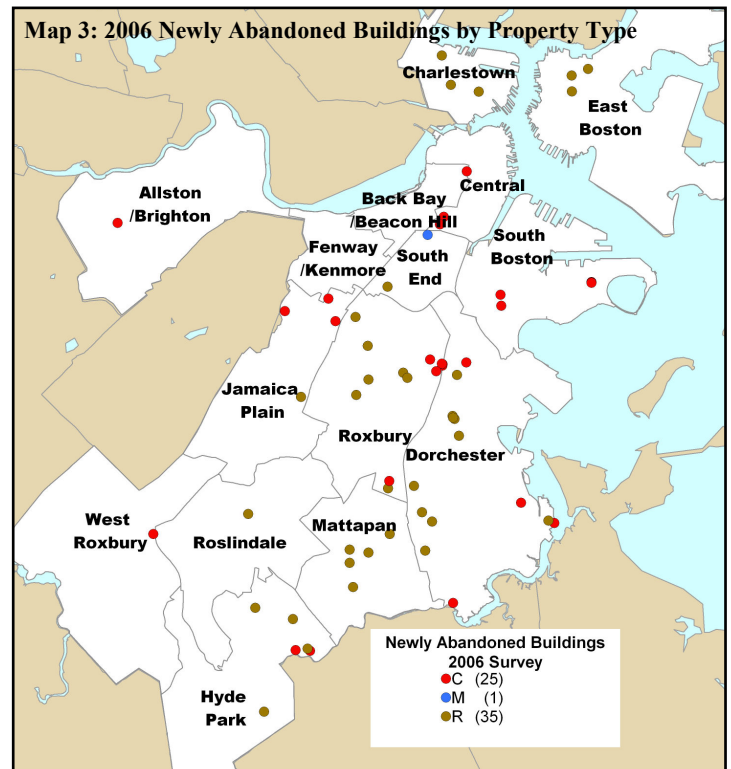
Map 2 shows the 66 buildings from the 2005 survey that were found to be no longer abandoned in the 2006 survey.

- 70% (46) were residential buildings.
- 26% (17) were commercial, and 4% (3) were mixed-use.

Map 3 shows the 61 buildings that were added to the abandoned building inventory.

- 57% (35) of the newly identified buildings were residential.
- 41% (25) were commercial, and 2% (1) were mixed-use.

Map 3: 2006 Newly Abandoned Buildings by Property Type





Trends 2006 Abandoned Buildings

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Chart 2 – Residential Abandoned by Type, 1997

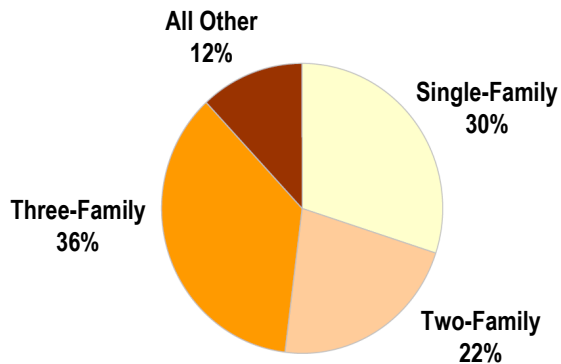
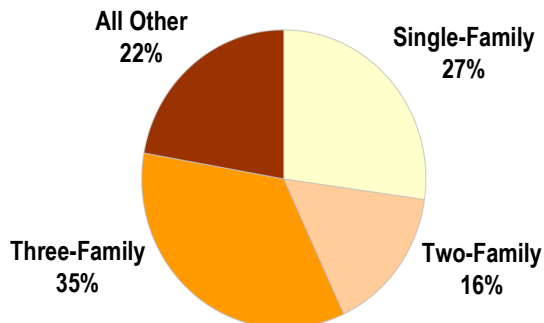


Chart 3 – Residential Abandoned by Type, 2006



TAX STATUS OF ABANDONED RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Charts 4 and 5 relate to the tax status of residential abandoned buildings.

From 1997 to 2006, the proportion of buildings that were publicly owned/tax exempted has fallen from 15% to 7%. In addition, the number of publicly-owned abandoned buildings has been reduced at a faster rate than privately-owned abandoned buildings.

The proportion of privately-owned buildings that owe taxes has increased from 16% of residential abandoned buildings to 20%.

RESIDENTIAL ABANDONMENT

Charts 2 and 3 show the proportion of residential abandoned buildings in each unit size category (single-family, two-family, etc.) in 1997 when the survey began and in 2006.

The proportion of abandoned buildings in the “All Other” category, including tax exempt and multi-family properties, decreased 4% from 2005 but increased 10% from 1997. The proportion of single- and two-family homes has decreased since 1997, reflecting more rehab activity of such properties. The percentage of three-family abandoned buildings has seen little change since 1997.

Chart 4: Tax Status 1997

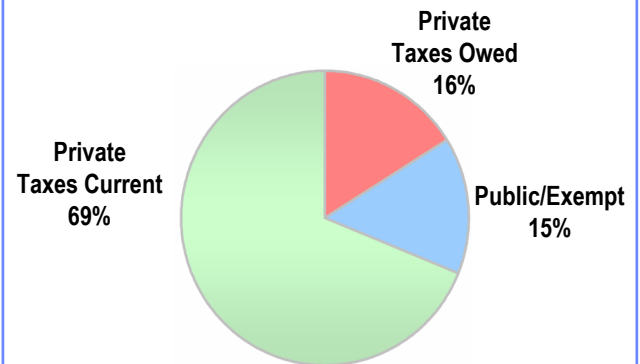
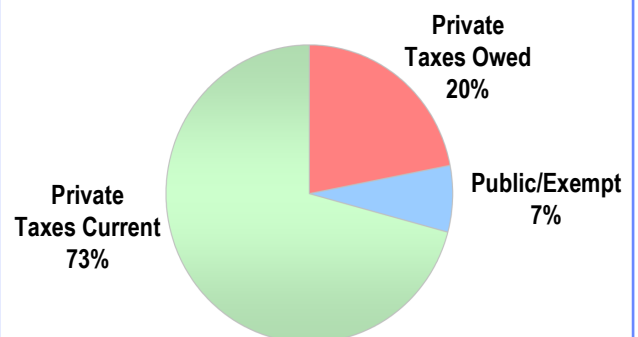


Chart 5: Tax Status 2006





Trends 2006

Abandoned Buildings

CITY OF BOSTON/THOMAS M. MENINO, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CHARLOTTE GOLAR RICHIE, CHIEF AND DIRECTOR

RESIDENTIAL ABANDONED BUILDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

From 1997 to 2006, there has been a 77% decrease in the number of abandoned residential buildings. In 1997, there were 796 abandoned residential properties while in 2006 there were 184 abandoned residential properties.

Roxbury, Dorchester, East Boston and Mattapan have the highest concentration of abandoned residential buildings. Together, the four neighborhoods comprise 76% of all residential abandoned buildings in 2006.

Roxbury continues to have the largest number of residential abandoned buildings (64), but the number is down dramatically since the beginning of the survey in 1997 (-79%). The number continued to drop, with a 12% decrease in residential abandonment from 2005 to 2006.

While Dorchester has seen a large decrease in abandoned residential buildings since 1997 (-74%) the rate slightly increased by 2% from 2005 to 2006 but was only one additional property. Dorchester and Roxbury have seen the greatest reduction in volume of abandoned properties since 1997. In Dorchester, 123 properties have been removed from the inventory since 1997 while in Roxbury 243 properties have been removed.

Of neighborhoods which had 25 or more abandoned buildings in 1997, Hyde Park, South End, Jamaica Plain, and Mattapan all had a decrease of greater than 80% from 1997 to 2006. These four neighborhoods have experienced the greatest percentage change in abandoned buildings since 1997.

Back Bay/Beacon Hill, Charlestown, Hyde Park, and South End saw large percentage increases from 2005 to 2006; however, the volumes were not substantial. Also, an examination of each instance reveals that these buildings are likely to be returned to use in the near future.

Chart 6: Residential Abandoned Buildings by Neighborhood

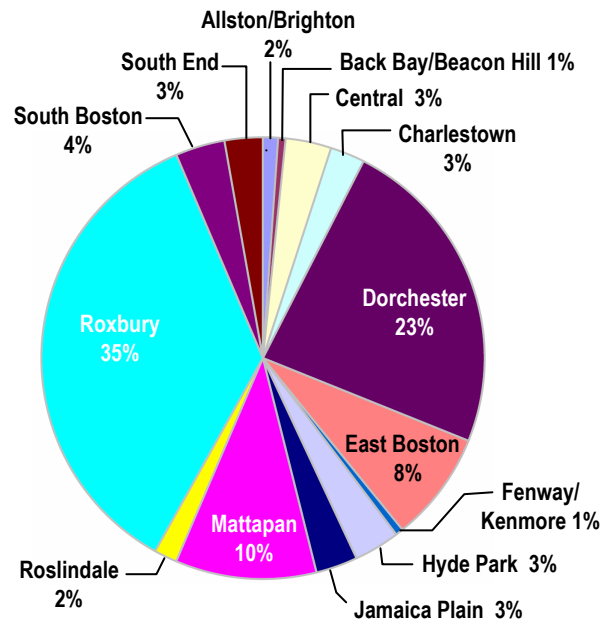


Table 1: Residential Abandoned Buildings by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Counts			Change	
	1997	2005	2006	%97-06	%05-06
Allston/Brighton	3	3	2	-33%	-33%
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	2	0	1	-50%	100%
Central	14	6	6	-57%	0%
Charlestown	1	3	5	400%	67%
Dorchester	166	42	43	-74%	2%
East Boston	52	17	15	-71%	-12%
Fenway/Kenmore	1	1	1	0%	0%
Hyde Park	44	2	6	-86%	200%
Jamaica Plain	37	7	6	-84%	-14%
Mattapan	101	16	19	-81%	19%
Roslindale	11	3	3	-73%	0%
Roxbury	307	73	64	-79%	-12%
South Boston	7	9	7	0%	-22%
South End	47	5	6	-87%	20%
West Roxbury	3	1	0	-100%	-100%
TOTALS	796	188	184	-77%	-2%



Trends 2006 Abandoned Buildings

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Chart 7: Commercial & Mixed-Use Abandoned Buildings by Neighborhood

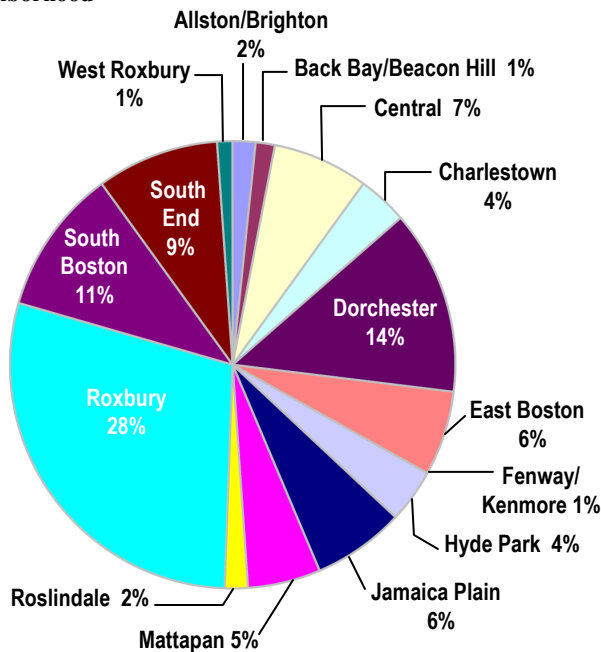


Table 2: Commercial/Mixed-Use Abandoned Buildings by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Counts			Change	
	1997	2005	2006	%97-06	%05-06
Allston/Brighton	5	4	3	-40%	-25%
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	1	2	2	100%	0%
Central	30	12	12	-60%	0%
Charlestown	0	6	6	N/A	0%
Dorchester	30	23	23	-23%	0%
East Boston	30	10	10	-67%	0%
Fenway/Kenmore	4	0	0	-100%	0%
Hyde Park	13	4	7	-46%	75%
Jamaica Plain	15	8	11	-27%	38%
Mattapan	13	9	9	-31%	0%
Roslindale	5	3	3	-40%	0%
Roxbury	77	51	49	-36%	-4%
South Boston	2	15	18	800%	20%
South End	22	14	15	-32%	7%
West Roxbury	1	1	2	100%	100%
TOTALS	248	162	170	-31%	5%

COMMERCIAL & MIXED-USE ABANDONED BUILDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Commercial and mixed-use building abandonment has decreased more slowly than residential abandonment; however, the total number of commercial and mixed-use buildings in 1997 was significantly smaller than residential buildings (248 compared to 796). From 1997 to 2006, there has been a 31% decrease in the number of abandoned commercial and mixed-use buildings, and a 5% increase from 2005 to 2006.

Of neighborhoods which had 25 or more abandoned buildings in 1997, Central and East Boston saw the greatest percentage reductions in abandonment, 60% and 67% respectively. Roxbury has seen the greatest reduction of volume with 28 commercial and mixed-use buildings removed from the abandonment inventory. However, Roxbury also has had the largest volume of abandoned commercial and mixed-use buildings each year.

Commercial and mixed-use buildings are more difficult to survey accurately since buildings that are actively used as warehouses are often boarded up and may appear derelict and abandoned. This may be especially true in South Boston, where the increase from 2 to 18 buildings in abandonment since 1997 may be due to a more rigorous survey in an area where old industrial buildings are becoming obsolete, but where new residential development has been on the increase.

From 2005 to 2006, the majority of the neighborhoods experienced no change in abandonment and neighborhoods that increased or decreased, changed by very little in volumes. In addition to South Boston, Jamaica Plain and Hyde Park the abandoned commercial and mixed-use buildings inventory increased by three buildings. Overall, there was very little change in commercial and mixed-use building abandonment.



Trends 2006 Abandoned Buildings

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INTRACTABLE ABANDONMENT

Some abandoned buildings reappear on the survey year after year. Table 3 includes a count of abandoned buildings by neighborhood in 2006 and the average number of years they have been listed as abandoned.

Fenway/Kenmore only has one abandoned building, and it has been on the list every year. For neighborhoods with 20 or more abandoned buildings, the most intractable abandonment can be found in Roxbury, South End, Mattapan, and East Boston.

Table 3: Average Number of Years Abandoned, 2006

Neighborhood	Count	Avg Years on List
Allston/Brighton	5	4.0
Back Bay/Beacon Hill	3	4.7
Central	18	4.9
Charlestown	11	2.6
Dorchester	66	4.5
East Boston	25	5.3
Fenway/Kenmore	1	10.0
Hyde Park	13	3.8
Jamaica Plain	17	4.3
Mattapan	28	5.5
Roslindale	6	3.7
Roxbury	113	6.3
South Boston	25	4.1
South End	21	5.9
West Roxbury	2	2.5
Citywide	354	4.8

Table 4: Tax Arrearage By Assessing Land Use, 2006

Land Use	Sum of Taxes Due	Count
A	\$34,832.21	1
C	\$636,740.02	17
I	\$27,492.88	4
R1	\$255,303.78	14
R2	\$73,421.08	7
R3	\$267,354.89	12
R4	\$15,331.31	3
RC	\$49,820.26	5
Totals	\$1,360,296.43	63

Land Use categories include Apartment (A), Commercial (C), Industrial (I), Single-Family to Three-Family Residential (R1-R3), 4-6 Family Residential (R4) and Mixed Use (RC).

PROPERTIES IN TAX TITLE

Table 4 at the left is a breakdown of taxes owed, sorted by assessing land use categories, which are described in a note to the right of the table.

63 of the 354 properties on this year's survey are held by private owners who are in tax arrears of approximately \$1.36 million.

21 commercial and industrial properties account for 49% of this arrearage; three-family properties make-up 20%; and 19% are single-family properties.



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CITY ABANDONMENT STRATEGY

Since 1997, there has been a significant reduction in the number of abandoned buildings in Boston. For Leading the Way II (FY2004-FY2007), the City committed to maintaining the downward trend by setting a target of reclaiming 130 of the remaining 270 abandoned residential buildings and reducing residential abandonment by half. So far, 162 residential buildings have been renovated and there has been a reduction in abandonment of 32%. The City has exceeded the goal of reclaiming 130 properties but fell short of reducing abandonment by 50% due to newly abandoned buildings being added to the inventory from 2003-2006.

The City's multi-pronged abandonment strategy has been instrumental in reducing abandonment and meeting set goals. The strategy is implemented by DND and includes the following major components:

- The Abandoned Buildings survey and this Trends report are completed each year and examine the causes of abandonment, as well as, prioritize properties for action. In addition to the report, a list of privately-owned abandoned buildings is published on the City's website to encourage potential developers to contact the owners and purchase the property. Also, all private property owners included in the survey are contacted by DND to clarify the status of the building and offer advice or assistance with financing, renovation or marketing.
- DND's Homeowner Services, Office of Business Development and Neighborhood Housing Development divisions may provide funding, project management and technical assistance to private building owners and developers to rehabilitate and redevelop abandoned buildings for eligible uses.

- DND's Real Estate Management division, through the Real Estate Disposition Initiative, uses request for proposals to dispose of tax-foreclosed abandoned buildings. The City-owned inventory has been reduced by 84% since 1997.

- Project Pride, a cooperative effort of DND, Inspectional Services and Sheriff's Department, combats illegal activity on City-owned and privately-owned abandoned properties by boarding and securing buildings. The costs are recovered by the City through a lien placed on the property.

Boston's Abandoned Housing Strategy was nationally recognized by the US Conference of Mayors (USCM) in 2006 as a "best practice". A summary of Boston's strategy was published in the *USCM Mayor's Resource Guide on Vacant and Abandoned Property*, which was released at the 74th Annual USCM Meeting.

In early 2007, DND was selected to participate in the National Vacant and Abandoned Properties Grant Program. The program awarded DND funding for software, hardware and training to foster innovative approaches to solving community problems. With the grant, GIS applications and a GPS handheld device will be used to enhance field work during the annual abandoned buildings survey.

The Abandoned Buildings Trends Report is published by the Policy Development and Research division of the City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development.

For more information about this publication, contact Ron Farrar at (617) 635-0340 or rfarrar.dnd@cityofboston.gov